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**Article title:**

**Embodied learning and school-based physical culture: implications for professionalism and practice in physical education**

**Author details:**

Malcolm Thorburn (a) University of Edinburgh; Steven Stolz (b) La Trobe University

Contact details (a):

Dr. Malcolm Thorburn  
Lecturer in Physical Education  
Moray House School of Education  
College of Humanities and Social Sciences  
University of Edinburgh  
St Leonard's Land  
Holyrood Road  
Edinburgh EH8 8AQ  
[Malcolm.Thorburn@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Malcolm.Thorburn@ed.ac.uk)

Contact details (b):

Dr. Steven Stolz  
Lecturer in Education  
La Trobe University  
Bundoora campus  
Melbourne  
Victoria 3086  
Australia  
[s.stolz@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:s.stolz@latrobe.edu.au)

## **Abstract**

We write as critical theorists who consider that in terms of scoping out robust conceptual elaborations which are suitable for contemporary schooling, that physical education has ground to make up connecting theory with practice and practice with theory. We advocate that aspects of existentialism and phenomenology can provide a theoretically sound basis on which to argue that embodied learning should be the foundational cornerstone of physical education programmes. To avoid embodied learning becoming overly learner centric and insular we advance Merleau-Pontian informed ideas on how learning could flourish when an individual and embodied focus merges with a school-wide physical culture agenda which is underpinned by social and moral theorising. In developing our focus on merging embodied learning and physical culture we draw upon MacIntyrean views on the goods which are internal to practice and extend thinking on how these goods could merge with the diverse aims and intentions informing the culture and ethos in schools. In pursuing these ambitions we outline the constructive activist-based benefits of teachers working within subsidiarity-based school communities where pedagogical decisions are made at a level consistent with realising whole schools aims. This is in spite of our acknowledgement that lack of career long professional learning adds to the difficulty of achieving these aims. In conclusion we argue that if physical education is to become a pivotal component of realising a diverse range of whole school aims there is a need for greater professional engagement with pedagogical approaches that attempt to derive greater meaning from learners movement experiences and which help learners to understand better both their own identity and the ethos of the school context and environment they share with others.

**Keywords:** Physical Education, Embodied learning, Physical culture, Phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty, MacIntyre, School ethos, Teachers professionalism, Meaning making, Social and moral development

## **Introduction**

Oscillating around contemporary debates on aims and values in physical education are concerns that talk of conflicting views might trigger alarm and add further to the sense of crisis discourse surrounding physical education e.g., when responding in different ways to various nationally framed health and physical activity targets. A contrasting view is that regularly reviewing traditions in physical education is a good thing as it highlights a conceptual vibrancy which is pivotal for robust professional learning and engagement with new ideas. Stolz and Kirk (2015) provide an interesting discussion on these matters and in terms of where this paper positions itself - it is firmly in the latter camp; in that we support the case for having lively discussions on aims and values, as it reflects a viable way of considering popular practices in physical education alongside advocacy calls for change. We will not dwell on the former view beyond registering our concern that if physical education is to be a pivotal component of the enhanced engagement there is with progressive education ideals across much of the Anglophone world (Priestley & Biesta, 2013) then there is little point in devising purpose and practice arrangements which run against the grain of these intentions.

Our thinking broadly follows Dewey who considers that resolving inherent conflicts between ‘individual ends, the demands of communal life and social approbation’ (Fesmire, 2003, p. 56) needs rational debate and critical review. It also reflects the call from Evans and Davies (2011, p. 263) for greater transdisciplinary theorising that includes a focus on the ‘complexity of embodied subjectivity ... and communities we claim to serve.’ Making progress on this basis involves a number of ‘border crossings’ (Evans & Davies, 2011, p. 263) which acknowledge and recognise that engagement with physical education needs to be constructed with regard to both individual

learners' interests and in relation to the broader ethos and culture in schools. We address these various challenges by advocating that aspects of existentialism and phenomenology provide a theoretically sound basis upon which to argue that embodied learning should be the main foundational cornerstone of physical education programmes (Stolz, 2014; 2015). We then tease out key arguments on how learners experiences of physical culture in physical education can be constructively developed and enriched in a context which is loosely bounded by Deweyan notions of 'democratic education, experimental intelligence, aesthetic virtues of sensitivity and perception, and moral imagination' (Fesmire, 2014, p. 205). In taking this agenda forward we develop links with MacIntyrean views on the internal goods of practice and then extend thinking on how these goods can be shared more widely through highlighting the relational possibilities for physical education to build coherent bridges with the diverse aims and ethos in different schools. We conclude by examining the main pedagogical challenges posed for teachers when creating learning environments which are of value to learners as individuals, learners as part of a shared group and learners as contributors to whole school ethos.

### **Embodied learning: implications for physical education**

In what follows we argue that engagement with aspects of existentialism and phenomenology should inform conceptual accounts of embodied learning in physical education. If effectively guided by teachers, learners ideas can be enhanced by a perspective which 'has to do with the universal-personal, not the particular-personal' (Martinkova & Parry, 2011, p. 194). This can lead to first-person accounts that are informed by rich narrative description and reflections which enable links between experiences and knowledge to become increasingly refined when making considered and verifiable judgements e.g., on the importance of human agency for the realization

of whole school aims. As such, phenomenology can be used as the methodological foundation for helping learners to understand and engage with their personal experiences (thoughts, perceptions, feelings) in ways that help them to derive a greater meaning about the world they live in (Thorburn & Marshall, 2014; Standal & Engelsrud, 2013). Over recent years various authors e.g., Kerry & Armour (2000), Brown and Payne (2009) have sought to elaborate their views on how a phenomenological perspective on learning could help frame enquiry and provide a methodological orientation for empirical research. Kerry & Armour's (2000) review contrasted the contributions of two founding fathers of phenomenology (Husserl and Heidegger) while Brown and Payne (2009) in their wide ranging conceptualising on the phenomenology of movement focussed on among others the contribution of Arnold (1979) and his thinking on meaning-making. This led Brown (2013) to further analyse Arnold's conceptualising of physical education practice through the holistic construct of learning 'about' 'through' and 'in' movement Arnold devised. Specifically, within the 'in' dimension Brown (2013, p. 30) notes that moving allows individuals to actualise themselves in 'distinctive, pleasing and bodily related contexts as a process of understanding their own embodied consciousness.' In so doing, learners have the opportunity to enter into reasoning, to lift themselves beyond their biological and psychological life and to 'live the life of thinking' (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 157). However, in more cautionary terms, making progress along these types of line is not without its challenges, for as Martinkova & Parry (2011, p. 188) note 'the most common mistake made by those who purport to be doing phenomenology is that they insist on the primacy of first-person phenomenological experiences as the source of their data' rather than focusing on intentionality, and by inference in a physical education context, on the fine detail of the learning process.

Thorburn (2008) and Stolz (2014, 2015) writings on phenomenology draw extensively on the work of Merleau-Ponty (1962; 1968) to critically explore the implications of the phenomenal body and what it means to come to know the world through embodied learning experiences, as Merleau-Ponty (1968) among the major founding fathers of phenomenology (i.e., Husserl, Heidegger, Satre) explored in most detail how the experiences and motility of the body can play a key role in our perception of the world. Merleau-Ponty contends that lived-body experiences should not be separated from cognitive learning; rather the holistic nature of the ‘body-subject’ provides a way of conceiving relations between the body and the world, which avoids over privileging the role of abstraction and cognition (concepts and rules) and under-representing the centrality of the body in human experience. Appreciation of this point enables phenomenological description to become more vivid than the ‘casual explanation which the scientist, historian or the sociologist may be able to provide’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. vii). Thus, rather than being bound by the dichotomies of reason/emotion and mind/body, Merleau-Ponty articulated a concept of lived space, where the body-subject's experience is referenced through movement and language. Consequently, knowledge is not something to be understood in a detached way, but is founded upon integrated perceptual experiences which reveal ever more of the world as we live and experience it (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). This enables our relations with our self and others to become more visible. By way of example, as learners run in a forest area, sensory experiences and bodily awareness exist together within a perceptual field, where at any one time parts of the experience such as the firmness of the forest track or colours in the forest are temporarily more prominent than others sights, sounds and smells (Thorburn & Marshall, 2014). In such instances, the continuous nature of comprehending our ever-changing perceptual field is made more revealing and understandable through our lived-body awareness, as the “body is the fabric into

which all objects are woven, and it is, at least in relation to the perceived world, the general instrument of my ‘comprehension’” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 235).

In reviewing the possibilities for more engaging forms of embodied-type learning experiences which might exist in physical education, Kretchmar (2006) considers that challenging and situated learning environments need to be created where meaning can emerge from solving problems, and where activity-based habits and accomplishments can be referenced against clear standards of success and criteria for excellence. Earlier probing’s by Kretchmar (2000) on the subsidiaries or pre-conditions needed by learners to gain greater meaning concluded that the three most frequently used strategies: the prudential; the intellectual and the affective were all of modest benefit. These strategies which became manifest in lessons predominantly framed as either: ‘exercise-as-useful; movement-as-understood, and activity-as-enjoyed’ have failed to equip learners with meaningful experiences (Kretchmar, 2000, p. 269). Thorburn and MacAllister (2013) consider that one subsidiary missing has been a sufficient appeal to the achievement of a type of movement-of-personal-value criterion which recognises that there is educational merit ‘in exploring how movements are experienced, performed and evaluated from an accurate phenomenological perspective’ (Stolz, 2014, p. 64). In such a context, Thorburn (2008) attempted to articulate (with particular reference to swimming) how a Merleau-Pontian phenomenology of physical education could improve the methodological basis for integrating learners’ lived-body performance experiences with the acquisition of increasingly detailed subject knowledge in the context of a high stakes examination award. This study, reflected the view that ‘Merleau-Ponty’s ontology is an ecological ontology’ (Dillon, 1997, xii) whereby past problems of distinguishing between a conscious mind and an inert body can be surpassed by



considering that, in effect, the body becomes the subject and the subject become the body (Hughson & Inglis, 2002). This, we argue, concurs with Brown & Payne's (2009) view that Merleau-Ponty's influence can contribute towards a re-conception of physical education where there is a greater emphasis on spatial and temporal aspects of movement within a social ecology of movement. Within this broader perspective on ecological integration between the learner and their environment 'the individual both initiates and responds to the educational milieu' (Jewett & Ennis, 1990, pp. 121-122).

The pursuit of these embodied learning ambitions makes us cautious about physical education pursuing narrower goals e.g., agendas which result in physical education being considered as part of schooling but not necessarily of educational importance (Carr, 1997). We consider that such goals are rather self-limiting relative to providing a more convincing educational account of physical education possibilities. We do recognize however that progressing towards excellence in performance through embodied learning approaches is not without its difficulties as learners' interests and needs become more specific. This can make it ever more problematic to accommodate learners' interests in a whole class context, as evident, for example, when learners have ever more particularised wishes to participate or compete against certain others, at particular times of the day and so on ad infinitum. Furthermore, conceptually such an insular focus is unhelpful within a concept of physical education which is informed by personal growth *and* social and moral aspirations. As MacIntyre (1999) notes, to overly ascribe moral agency to the individual is problematic as it values the subjective person over social cohesion and under acknowledges the importance of community decision making. In practice, addressing these considerations is evident in many new progressive educational arrangements. For example, the

personal and social capabilities highlighted as being a key component part of the new health and physical education curriculum in Australia indicates that through working collaboratively learners should develop an appreciation of their own strengths and abilities and those of their peers as well as developing a range of interpersonal skills such as communication, negotiation, teamwork and leadership, and an appreciation of diverse perspectives (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2012).

On this basis physical educators need to creatively consider how learners can cross borders and come to recognise that as education progresses physical education contains an increased expectation of shared participation and interaction with others. We consider that insignificant attention has been paid to this fundamental issue in justificatory arguments of physical education in recent years, especially in terms of how to respond to these arguments in positive terms. We favour a fusion that reflects MacAllister's (2013, p. 917) lead that physical education is well placed to contain a certain 'double value', such is its capacity to educate the body and the mind through active participation and reflection at the same time as making good claims that the subject could cultivate social and moral habits through engagement in regular physical activity. Progress along these lines would help support justifications which move beyond arguing that physical education's intrinsic pleasure enhancing possibilities represents some form of distinctive curriculum claim (e.g., Pringle, 2010); a somewhat implausible argument given the high levels of widespread learner disaffection there has been in physical education over many years (Gard, Hickey-Moodey & Enright, 2013). It would also counter examples of instrumentalism where physical education is largely seen to be beneficial in terms of its health dividend in adult life (Haerens et al., 2011). We do realise however, that in the interest of

conceptual vibrancy and the historic traditions of physical education, that social and moral claims as part of whole school physical culture identity are not the only claims which can be advanced. As such, those who consider that the aesthetic, the spiritual or whatever else has been under-recognised in this paper should add to debate by developing their own critiques.

### **Physical culture: implications for physical education**

Given Larsson & Quennerstedt (2012, p. 294) clarification that in ‘phenomenological theorizing, the physicality of the individual appears to exist prior to any sociocultural context’ it is of concern that Brown & Payne (2009) report that interest in empirically investigating the phenomenology of movement could become stymied by the social and political expectations placed on physical education. This highlights the need for physical educationalists to review how physical education can value the breadth of learners varied and multi-layered meaning-making experiences within whole class settings. We believe that Kirk’s (2010) teasing out of how physical culture incorporates a ‘body in nature’ and ‘body in culture’ focus is a helpful one in foregrounding discussions of what it means to be physically educated, coinciding as it does with Kirk’s (1999, p. 64) earlier view on how the recovery of the notion of physical culture could inform ‘the kind of educational mission school physical education might realistically pursue.’

We also consider that the views of Jewett & Mullan (1977) on how movement learning can meet the varied needs of different schools and the diverse reasons why learners are motivated or demotivated towards voluntary participation are worthwhile to review when considering how to coherently connect curriculum purposes with pedagogical practices. Building on this work and the influence of Dewey (1916), Jewett and Ennis (1990) proposed that ecological integration

could inform the relationship between humans and the natural world and become a suitable value orientation for curriculum decision-making. These writings are helpful in teasing out our epistemological position i.e., one where we take forward a pluralist (rather than dualist) account of movement, where movement is understood in terms of the educational environment within which learners are moving and where there is an avoidance of unnecessary normativity; as apparent, for example, in situations where teachers take an unduly narrow view of what counts as being important in movement. Crucial for closely aligning learning aims and pedagogical practices is the sensitivity and appropriateness of the language teachers' use; as evident, for example, through a focus on encouraging shared universal-personal intentions rather than dwelling on more insular particular-personal conversations.

We argue that progress along these lines can help physical education meet the two conditions Carr (1998) requires for physical education to be part of the curriculum i.e., that it is widely endorsed as being morally beneficial in society and that it can effectively operate within the context of formal schooling. Our thoughts on how these two conditions can be achieved are largely underpinned by MacIntyre (1981/2007) whose holistic vision is that it is from inside practices that learners and teachers can recognize and appreciate how the goods of practice are informed by personal narrative, the virtues which derive from our social and moral life and through developing good habits. The term 'communities of practice' does not feature in MacIntyre's (2007) work as it does in Wenger's (1998) account of this area, however as McLaughlin (2003, p. 341) notes 'the general implications of the notion are inherent in MacIntyre's concept of a practice.' As such, through practice learners should become increasingly adept at cultivating stable values that display practical wisdom. This would be

apparent, for example, by learners focusing on achieving excellences of character. On this basis, the goods internal to practice have transferable gains, as engaging in practice can lead learners towards an ‘inculcation of those virtues that are needed to direct us towards the achievement of our common and individual goods’ (MacIntyre & Dunne, 2002, p. 2). MacIntyre’s views on practice have enjoyed something of a pre-eminence among philosophers of education (Hager, 2011) based on the identification of the key features of practice and there ‘invitation to a certain kind of self-involving and self-transformative co-operative engagement ... (combined with) ... deep-seated intuitions about the nature and value of teaching, properly conceived, particularly in opposition to technicist and instrumentalist conceptions of the activity’ (McLaughlin, 2003, p. 347).

Pivotal to incorporating a merged ‘body in nature’ and ‘body in culture’ focus within a MacIntyrian concept of practice is achieving a shared and coherent sense of excellence which emphasizes to learners the need to use time constructively to improve practical performance as well to develop many of the shared values associated with practical activities e.g., sense of fair play, recognizing rights and responsibilities, accepting decisions and keeping winning and losing in perspective. Thus, following MacIntyre’s (2007) view of practice, learners need to extend their human powers as well as recognize the authority of the standards which govern practice arrangements. To help learners do so requires teachers to facilitate discussion and help learners to critically engage with their experiences, recognize available choices and discern viable ways forward (Dewey, 1938). In brief, to follow standard Aristotelian-informed plans for teaching where there is a threefold emphasis on: the requirement for practice; the need for teachers to exemplify the virtues and through extended opportunities for learners to exercise reflection and

deliberation (Arthur & Carr, 2013). Progress in this way is largely consistent with Kretchmar's (2006) view that physical education can be a genuine turning point in learners' lives with challenging and situated learning environments creating opportunities for learners to reference their activity-based habits against the achievement of clear standards of success. This enables learners to make greater sense of their world, with their uncertainties and hunches informing the establishment of more rounded conceptual understandings which are both accurate (objective) plus relevant to their lives (i.e., having an internal value).

However, a conceptual stumbling block in following MacIntyre (2007) is that he does not necessarily consider that teaching is a practice. Rather he considers that it is a set of skills and habits which serve a variety of practices on the basis that 'all teaching is for the sake of something else and so teaching does not have its own goods' (MacIntyre & Dunne, 2002, p. 9). This has led to considerable consternation among philosophers of education on the precise nature of the relationship between *moral* and *technical* definitions of professionalism, see for example Higgins (2011), as the perception has emerged that 'MacIntyre seems to confirm a common view that there is little more to educational and pedagogical expertise than a few basic organizational skills and executive character traits' (Carr, 2003, p. 259). Without becoming sidetracked by these discussions we see the merit in recognizing that while it may be true that teachers do not always need 'to apply theories or develop technologies in the manner of other professions - such as perhaps medicine or civil engineering - in order to *teach* (original emphasis retained) well' (Carr, 2003, p. 263) this should not lead us to consider that teaching is straightforward, as school teaching has its own form of complex rationality. Therefore, we suggest that Davies (2013, p. 475) teasing out of teachers institutional and educative role, and his proposal that teaching is best

considered as not just a complex activity ‘but a complex set of different activities co-located in one place and engaged in by the same agents’ is a helpful one, as it highlights how teachers can mediate environments designed to foster a shared embodied learning and physical culture focus within wider whole school settings.

A second conceptual stumbling block in following MacIntyre is that his views, informed as they are by Hegel and Marx, frequently question the external goods of institutions e.g., ‘the common goods of the practice is always vulnerable to the competitiveness of the institution’ (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 549). Thus, physical education needs to avoid suffering the ignominy of its internal goods being considered of only modest educational benefit but where its external institutional goods (e.g. the production of sports teams and such like) are seen as a marketable commodity in a business rather than strictly educational sense; alas, a situation not unknown in physical education (Penney & Evans, 1999). Therefore, in order to exemplify the more constructive possibilities which exist in physical education, a contemporary dance example is provided. Reflecting MacIntyre’s (2007) Aristotelian-informed threefold plans for teaching (Arthur & Carr, 2013), *the requirement for practice* can be fulfilled through dynamic and interactive practice opportunities. These could include, for example, democratically-informed conversations on poise, precision, projection, relationships, the uses of space, feeling, mood, and ideas on music, costume and lighting which collectively enhance the likelihood of achieving excellence and a shared sense of *telos*. *The need for teachers to exemplify the virtues* could be evident through teachers sustaining the development of dance related activity, through displaying moral excellences of character in their teaching. These could be evident, for example, through generosity, friendliness, truthfulness and a measured degree of right ambition whereby teachers’

character dispositions enable learners to cooperate and maintain a focus on the integrity of the practice. In this micro community of practice, *extended opportunities for learners to exercise reflection and deliberation* would be available as learners and teachers have the opportunity to put down roots and experiment with creative forces as they share and discuss aesthetic and emotional (as well as social and moral) sensitivities associated with the development of their dance related ideas.

This comprehensive engagement in learning, involving as it would a mix of instances of listening, instances of sharing and instances of leading, would help learners to explain and understand their inner world and the world around them. These phenomenological-informed intentions are consistent with Stangal and Engelstrud (2013) elaboration on how learners in dance refined their spatial and temporal aspects of moving through individual reflection and shared collaborative working with other learners and teachers. This approach enabled learners to become more aware of being-in-the-world and for their experiences to contribute to all domains of learning – physical, cognitive, emotional and social (Stolz, 2013, 2014). We see points of connection as well with Jewett & Ennis (1990) reasoning that an emphasis on the personal search for meaning combined with a commitment to balance individual needs with societal needs can lead to learning environments where a thorough understanding of the principles of movement can ‘foster a greater awareness of an appreciation for the various aspects of human physical activity’ (p.127). Arguably, it also links with Brown & Payne (2009) Arnold-informed amplification of learning contexts where the experience of movement is deeply connected with ‘kinaesthetic flow patterns, pleasurable bodily experience and the formation of self-identity’(p. 427). This is provided (as ever) that theorizing can be squared with some of the difficulties



teachers report in understanding Arnold's conceptualizing on learning 'about', 'through' and 'in' movement (Stolz & Thorburn, 2015; Pill & Stolz, 2015).

Brief as the dance example is we consider that it could with further development satisfy the movement-of-personal-value criterion Thorburn and MacAllister (2013) endorse. Furthermore, it reflects the communitarian benefits MacIntyre (2007) seeks in that individual rights and autonomy can merge with the common goods associated with institutional goals. Thus, as practice experiences become part of learners' wider social conversations, the school environment can become a context around which the goods of practice can be shared both internally and externally. Therefore, enthusiasm to share the goods of dance practice can link to performing to wider audiences (e.g., perhaps in a school social area at lunchtime) with other school learners enjoying the dance and engaging their senses fully in observing, listening and contributing to the communal nature of the experience. News of the dance performance can also be shared across social media platforms and cited by the school (newsletters, school displays) as evidence of contributing to whole school aims and the cultural life of the school. In this respect, we support Wegner's (1998) belief that practices can be engaged in for extrinsic reasons, and that one need not be as suspicious on this point as MacIntyre (2007) is. As such, we contend that it is possible to achieve a position where the internal goods of practice merge effectively with the external (institutional) goods of practice in ways that are at the very least morally neutral (Hager, 2011).

### **Supporting whole school communities: implications for physical education professionalism**

In progressing with calls for the internal goods of practice to be informed by achieving excellence - i.e., in terms of striving for embodied learning gains and recognising and

understanding the social and moral benefits which can arise from practice - we consider the distinction Sachs (2003) makes between democratic professionalism (i.e., founded on teachers engaging with the complexities of changing social and economic conditions and of seeking to demystify their professional work) and managerial professionalism (i.e., founded on teachers individual accountability and compliance with policy directives) to be a telling one for physical education. For as Casey (2014) helpfully distinguishes, there are those such as Haerens et al., (2011) who consider that teachers would have difficulty designing from scratch suitably nuanced curriculum which recognise the complexity of competing ideas surrounding physical education and those such as Jewett, Bain and Ennis (1995) who consider that curriculum praxis gains could best emerge as a consequence of ongoing reflection and action following increased familiarity with various theoretical perspectives on physical education. We see the thinking of Jewett et al. (1995) as being closer in spirit to the democratic view of professionalism Sachs (2003) endorses. In addition, we see a managerial (technicist) view of professionalism as only partially camouflaging the problems there are with curriculum stasis and lack of calculated experimentation in physical education (Evans, Davies & Rich, 2014). For example, while Puhse and Gerber (2005) have shown that physical educators worldwide agree that physical education should be a constructive site for social and moral development, Jacobs, Knoppers and Webb (2013) have also shown that physical education teachers rarely integrate social and moral development into their learning and teaching in a way which is pedagogically structured and part of a planned process. As such, we consider that it would be helpful in the future if authors interested in curriculum planning, pedagogical practice and educational worthiness claims reviewed carefully the links between theory and practice *and* practice and theory. For as MacIntyre (1999, p. 136) notes ‘we learn what our common good is, and indeed what are

individual goods are, not primarily and never only by theoretical reflection, but in everyday shared activities and the evaluations of alternatives that those activities impose.’

Within these parameters we see the benefit of reviewing the links between conceptual aims and the nature and expectations of teachers’ in-situ teacher decision making. In this respect, we believe that the principle of subsidiarity should largely prevail where decisions are made at the lowest level possible which is consistent with realising whole school aims; and that mostly this will be at class teacher level rather than being directed by Heads of Faculty or by the Head teacher. Reflecting Davies (2013), this position blends two contrasting professional perspectives; the need for individual accountability and a commitment to a shared collaborative concept of whole school professionalism. If effective, curriculum design and implementation can reflect whole school aims and avoid being inhibited by sectional teacher preferences. Something akin to these types of learning ambition are captured by O’Connor, Jeanes and Alfrey’s (2014) description of authentic inquiry-based learning, where progressive pedagogies and a focus on the fine detail of learning provide learners with the opportunity to critically reflect on movement and to collaboratively investigate learner-identified issues relevant to their physical activity opportunities. While there are learner-centered differences between learners reviewing through a critical inquiry lens their engagement with physical activity opportunities and a phenomenological inquiry focus based on embodied consciousness and reflecting on intentions, it is of concern nevertheless that O’Connor et al. (2014, p. 1) found that engagement with learning ideas were less than intended with learners - and teachers - lacking the knowledge and ‘sound understanding of a critical-inquiry process that would have allowed them to deconstruct and reconstruct new ideas in deep connected ways.’ Thus, optimistic as we are about the

conceptual possibilities for physical education when founded upon embodied learning and physical culture imperatives, we recognise that progress is likely to be influenced by the extent to which teachers' see the worthwhileness of pursuing such goals, accurately understand the ontological implications of innovation, are suitably empowered pedagogically to make decisions and reflect on their practice and supported by suitable career-long professional learning opportunities (Makopoulou & Armour, 2011).

## **Conclusion**

We have argued that Merleau-Pontian informed engagement with aspects of existentialism and phenomenology should inform conceptual accounts of embodied learning in physical education, as integrated spatial and temporal experiences have the capacity to reveal ever more of the world learners live in and experience. However, even though embodied learning begins by being particularly illuminating at an individual level, there comes a time within the pragmatics of physical education programming, where embodied learning needs to clearly connect with a physical culture focus that can further enhance learners' shared experience of physical education and contribute to the realisation of whole school aims. To date though there has been an insufficient focus on how this can be achieved. Our attempt to conceptually clarify the need to cross borders in planning and practice is based on recognising that physical education is predominantly taught to classes/groups which are typically defined by age and thereafter by ability and/or interest. This makes it vital that a commitment towards embodied learning and school-based physical culture is matched by the pedagogical capacity for teachers to teach expertly in group settings where time is often limited, classes are large and facilities are modest. Our position is made even more challenging by recommending that teachers are entrusted with a

greater autonomy to configure programme arrangements at a time when there are often problems with the quality of career long professional development, streamlined policy procedures and simplified curriculum aims. Nevertheless, we argue that such prospects are better than accepting a view of professionalism which is underpinned by an uncritical acquiescence with many of the prevailing ideas which currently surround theory, policy and practice in physical education. As such, we consider that MacIntyre's (2007) lead on how learners can achieve excellence through the internal goods of practice can help advance a perspective on physical education that is framed around embodied learning and physical culture, and the virtues that derive from our shared social and moral life in schools. Thus informed, a greater sense of schools common good can help inform the multi-various ways in which physical education can successfully be practised.

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